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No. 18.

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CHAPTER LXXI.

A FOREST PATH.

When I reached Weimar, I quitted the diligence, resolved to make the remainder of the journey on foot, for thus I should both economize the little means I possessed, and escape many of the questionings and inquiries to which, as a traveller by public conveyance, I was exposed. Knapsack on shoulder, then, and staff in hand, I plodded onward; and although frequently coming up with others on their way homeward, I avoided all companionship with those whom I could no longer think of as comrades.

The two tides of population which met upon that great highway, told the whole history of war. Here came the young soldiers, fresh enrolled in the conscription, glowing with ardour, and bounding with life and buoyancy, and mingling their village songs with warlike chants. There, foot-sore and weary, with tattered uniform and weather-beaten look, toiled along the tired veteran, turning, as he went, a glance of compassionate contempt on those whose wild "*vivas*" burst forth in greeting. As for me, I could neither partake of the high hopes of the one, nor sympathize with the war-worn nature of tne other. Disappointment, bitter disappointment in every cherished expectation, had thrown a chill over me, and I wanted even the energy to become reckless. In this state, I did not dare to face the future, but in moody despondence reflected on the past. Was this the destiny Marie de Meudon predicted for me? was the ever-present thought of my mind. Is it thus I should appear before her?

A hundred times came the thought to join the new levies as a soldier, to carry a musket in the ranks; but then came back, in all its force, the memory of the distrust and suspicion my services had met with—the conviction hourly became clearer to me, that I fought not for liberty, but despotism—that it was not freedom, but slavery, in whose cause I shed my blood.

To avoid meeting with the detachments which each day occupied the road, I turned from the chaussée on passing Eisenach, and took a forest path, that led through Murbach, to Fulda. My path led through the Creutz Mountains, a wild and unfrequented tract of country, where few cottages were to be seen, and scarcely a village existed. Vast forests of dark pines, or bleak and barren mountains, stretched away on either side—a few patches of miserable tillage, here and there, met the view—but the scene was one of saddening influence, and harmonized but too nearly with my own despondence.

To reach a place of shelter for the night, I was more than once obliged to walk twelve leagues during the day, and had thus to set out

before daylight. This exertion, however, brought its own reward: the stimulant of labour, the necessity of a task, gradually allayed the mental irritation I suffered under; a healthier and more manly tone of thinking succeeded to my former regrets, and with a heart elevated, if not cheered, I continued my way.

The third day of my toilsome journey was drawing to a close—a mass of heavy and louring clouds, dark and thunder-charged, slowly moved along the sky—and a low, moaning sound, that seemed to sigh along the ground, boded the approach of a storm. I was still three leagues from my halting-place, and began to deliberate within myself, whether the dense pine wood, which came down to the side of the road, might not afford a safer refuge from the hurricane, than the chances of reaching a house before it broke forth.

The shepherds who frequented these dreary tracts often erected little huts of bark, as a shelter against the cold and severity of the wintry days, and to find out one of these now was my great endeavour. Scarcely had I formed the resolve when I perceived a small path opening into the wood, at the entrance to which a piece of board nailed against the trunk of a tree, gave tidings that such a place of security was not far distant. These signs of forest life I had learned in my wanderings, and now strode forward with renewed vigour.

The path led gradually upwards, along the mountain side, which soon became so encumbered with brushwood, that I had much difficulty in pushing my way—and at last began to doubt, whether I might not have wandered from the track. The darkness was now complete—night had fallen, and a heavy crashing rain poured down upon the tree tops, but could not penetrate through their tangled shelter. The wind, too, swept in loud gusts above, and the long-threatened storm begun. A loud, deafening roar, like that of the sea itself, arose, as the leafy branches bent before the blast, or snapped with sudden shock beneath the hurricane; clap after clap of thunder resounded, and then the rain descended in torrents—the heavy drops, at last, trickling from leaf to leaf, reaching me as I stood. Once more I pushed forward, and had not gone many paces, when the red glare of a fire caught my eye: steadfastly fastening my gaze upon the flame, I hurried on, and at length perceived with ecstacy that the light issued from the window of a small hovel, such as I have already mentioned. To gain the entrance of the hut I was obliged to pass the window, and could not resist the temptation to give a glance at the interior, whose cheerful blaze betokened habitation.

It was not without surprise that, instead of the figure of a shepherd reposing beside his fire, I beheld that of an old man, whose dress bespoke the priest, kneeling in deep devotion at the foot of a small crucifix attached to the wall. Not all the wild sounds of the raging storm seemed to turn his attention from the object of his worship—his eyes were closed, but the head thrown backwards, showed his face upturned, when the lips moved rapidly in prayer. Never had I beheld so perfect a picture of intense devotional feeling—every line in his marked countenance indicated the tension of a mind filled with one

engrossing thought—while his tremulous hands, clasped before him, shook with the tremor of strong emotion.

What a contrast to the loud warring of the elements, that peaceful figure, raised above earth and its troubles, in the spirit of his holy communing—how deeply touching the calm serenity of his holy brow, with the railing crash of falling branches, and the deep baying of the storm! I did not dare to interrupt him, and when I did approach the door, it was with silent step and noiseless gesture. As I stood, the old priest—for now I saw that he was such—concluded his prayer, and detaching his crucifix from the wall, he kissed it reverently, and placed it in his bosom—then, rising slowly from his knees, he turned towards me. A slight start of surprise, as quickly followed by a smile of kindly greeting, escaped him, while he said in French—

"You are welcome, my son—come in, and share with me the shelter, for it is a wild night."

"A wild night, indeed, father," said I, casting my eyes around the little hut, where nothing indicated the appearance of habitation—"I could have wished you a better home than this against the storms of winter."

"I am a traveller like yourself," said he, smiling at my mistake—"and a countryman, too, if I mistake not."

The accents in which these words were spoken pronounced him a Frenchman, and a very little sufficed to ratify the terms of our companionship; and having thrown a fresh billet on the fire, we both seated ourselves before it. My wallet was, fortunately, better stored than the good father's, and having produced its contents, we supped cheerfully, and like men who were not eating their first bivouac meal.

"I perceive, father," said I, as I remarked the manner in which he disposed his viands, "I perceive you have campaigned ere now—the habits of the service are not easily mistaken."

"I did not need that observation of yours," replied he, laughing slightly, "to convince me you were a soldier—for, as you truly say, the camp leaves its indelible traces behind it. You are hastening on to Berlin, I suppose?"

I blushed deeply at the question—the shame of my changed condition had been hitherto confined to my own heart, but now it was to be confessed before a stranger.

"I ask your pardon, my son, for a question I had no right to ask—and even there, again, I but showed my soldier education. I am returning to France, and in seeking a short path from Eisenach, found myself where you see as night was falling, well content to be so well lodged—all the more, if I am to have your companionship."

Few and simple as these words were, there was a tone of frankness in them, not less than the evidence of a certain good breeding, by which he apologized for his own curiosity in speaking thus freely of himself, that satisfied me at once; and I hastened to inform him, that circumstances had induced me to leave the service, in which I had been a captain, and that I was now, like himself, returning to France.

"You must not think, father," added I, with some eagerness—"you

must not think that other reasons than my own free-will have made me cease to be a soldier."

"It would ill become me to have borne such a suspicion," interrupted he quickly. "When one so young and full of life as you are, leaves the path where lie honour, and rank, and fame, he must have cause to make the sacrifice—for I can scarce think that, at your age, these things seem nought to your eyes."

"You are right, father, they are not so; they have been my guiding stars for many a day—alas! that they can be such no longer."

"There are higher hopes to cherish than these," said he, solemnly; "ay, even with the longings of mere ambition, for we all of us cling to the things of life, till in their perishable nature they wean us off with disappointment and sorrow. From such a trial am I now suffering," added he in a low voice, while the tears rose to his eyes and slowly coursed along his pale cheeks.

There was a pause neither of us felt inclined to break, when at length the priest said—

"What was your corps in the service?"

"The 8th hussars of the guard," said I, trembling at every word.

"Ah, *he* was in the 'guides,'" repeated he mournfully to himself; "you knew the regiment?"

"Yes, they belonged to the guard also; they wore no epaulettes, but a small gold arrow on the collar."

"Like this," said he, unfastening the breast of his cassock and taking out a small package, which, among other things, contained the designation of the *corps des guides* in an arrow of gold embroidery. "Had he not beautiful hair, long and silky as a girl's," said he, as he produced a lock of light and sunny brown. "Poor Alphonse! thou wouldst have been twenty hadst thou lived till yesterday. If I shed tears, young man, it is because I have lost the great earthly solace of my solitary life; others have kindred and friends, have happy homes, which even when bereavements come, time will heal up the wound—I had but him!"

"He was your nephew, perhaps?" said I, half fearing to interfere with his sorrow.

The old man shook his head in token of dissent, while he muttered to himself—

"Auerstadt may be a proud memory to some, to me it is a word of sorrow and mourning. The story is but a short one—alas! it has but one colour throughout.

"Count Louis de Meringues—of whom you have doubtless heard that he rode as postilion to the carriage of his sovereign in the celebrated flight to Varennes—fell by the guillotine the week after the king's trial; the countess was executed on the same scaffold as her husband—I was the priest who accompanied her at the moment, and in my arms she placed her only child, an infant boy of two years. There was a cry among the crowd to have the child executed also, and many called out that the spawn would be a serpent one day, and it were better to crush it while it was time; but the little fellow was so handsome, and looked so win-

ningly around him on the armed ranks and the glancing weapons, that even *their* cruel hearts relented, and he was spared. It is to me like yesterday, as I remember every minute circumstance; I can recall even the very faces of that troubled and excited assemblage, that at one moment screamed aloud for blood, and at the next were convulsed with savage laughter. As I forced my way through the dense array, a rude arm was stretched out from the mass, and a finger dripping with the gore of the scaffold was drawn across the boy's face, while a ruffian voice exclaimed—'The Meringues were ever proud of their blood, let us see if it be redder than other people's. The child laughed, and the mob with horrid mockery laughed too.

"I took him home with me to my presbytère at Sevres, for that was my parish, and we lived together in peace until the terrible decree was issued which proclaimed all France atheist; then we wandered southwards towards that good land which through every vicissitude was true to its faith and its king, La Vendee. At Lyons we were met by a party of the revolutionary soldiers, who, with a 'Commissaire' of the government, were engaged in raising young men for the conscription. Alphonse, who was twelve years old, felt all a boy's enthusiasm at the warlike display before him, and persuaded me to follow the crowd into the 'Place de Terreaux,' where the numbers were read out.

"'Paul Ducos," cried a voice aloud, as we approached the stage on which the commissary and his staff were standing—'where is this Paul Ducos?'

"'I am here,' replied a fine frank-looking youth of some fifteen years; 'but my father is blind, and I cannot leave him.'

"'We shall soon see that,' called out the commissary. 'Clerk, read out his *signalement*.'

"'Paul Ducos, son of Eugene Ducos, formerly calling himself Count Ducos de la Breche——'

"'Down with the royalists—*a bas!* the tyrants!' screamed the mob, not suffering the remainder to be heard.

"'Approach, Paul Ducos,' said the commissary.

"'Wait here, father,' whispered the youth; 'I will come back presently;' but the old man, a fine and venerable figure, the remnant of a noble race, held him fast, and as his lips trembled, said, 'Do not leave me, Paul—my child, my comforter, stay near me.'

"The boy looked round him for one face of kindly pity in this emergency, when turning towards me, he said rapidly, 'Stand near him,' he broke from the old man's embrace, and rushing through the crowd, mounted the scaffold.

"'You are drawn for the conscription, young man,' said the commissary; 'but in consideration of your father's infirmity, a substitute will be accepted—have you such?'

"The boy shook his head mournfully and in silence.

"'Have you any friend who would assist you here? Bethink you awhile,' rejoined the commissary, who, for his station and duties, was a kind and benevolent man.

"'I have none; they have left us nothing, neither home, nor

friends,' said the youth bitterly; 'and if it were not for his sake, I care not what they do with me.'

"'Down with the tyrants!' yelled the mob, as they heard these haughty words.

"'Then your fate is decreed,' resumed the commissary.

"'No, not yet,' cried out Alphonse, as breaking from my side, he gained the steps and mounted the platform—'I will be his substitute.'

"Oh! how shall I tell the bitter anguish of that moment, which at once dispelled the last remaining hope I cherished, and left me destitute for ever. As I dashed the tears from my eyes and looked up, the two boys were locked in each other's arms. It was a sight to have melted any heart, save those around them; but bloodshed and crime had choked up every avenue of feeling, and left them, not men, but tigers.

"'Alphonse de Meringues,' cried out the boy, in answer to a question regarding his name.

"'There is no such designation in France,' said a grim-looking, hard-featured man, who, wearing the tricoloured scarf, sat at the table beside the clerk.

"'I was never called by any other,' rejoined the youth proudly.

"'Citizen Meringues,' interposed the commissary mildly, 'what is your age?'

"'I know not the years,' replied he; 'but I have heard that I was but an infant when they slew my father.'

"A fierce roar of passion broke from the mob below the scaffold as they heard this, and again the cry broke forth—'Down with the tyrants.'

"'Art thou, then, the son of that base sycophant who rode courier to the Capet to Varennes?' said the hard-featured man at the table.

"'Of the truest gentleman of France,' called out a loud voice from below the platform.—'*Vive le roi!*' It was the blind man who spoke, and waved his cap above his head.

"'To the guillotine, to the guillotine!' screamed a hundred voices, in tones wilder than the cries of famished wolves, as seizing the aged man, they tore his clothes to very rags. In an instant all attention was turned from the platform to the scene below it, where, with shouts and screams of fury, the terrible mob yelled aloud for blood. In vain the guards endeavoured to keep back the people, who twice rescued their victim from the hands of the soldiery, and already a confused murmur rose that the commissary himself was a traitor to the public, and favoured the tyrants, when a dull, clanking sound rose above the tumult, and a cheer of triumph proclaimed the approach of the instrument of torture.

"In their impetuous torrent of vengeance they had dragged the guillotine from the distant end of the 'Place,' where it usually stood, and there now still knelt the figure of a condemned man, lashed with arms behind him on the platform, awaiting the moment of his doom. Oh! that terrible face, whereon death had already set its seal. With glazed, lack-lustre eye, and cheek leaden and quivering, he gazed around on the fiendish countenances like one awakening from a dream, his lips parted as though to speak, but no sound came forth.

"'Place, place for Monsieur le Marquis!' shouted a ruffian, as he assisted to raise the figure of the blind man up the steps, and a ribald yell of fiendish laughter followed the brutal jest.

"'Thou art to make thy journey in most noble company,' said another to the culprit on the platform.

"'An he see not his way in the next world better than in this, thou must lend him a hand, friend,' said a third; and with many a ruffian joke they taunted their victims, who stood on the last threshold of life.

"Among the crowd upon the scaffold of the guillotine I could see the figure of the blind man as it leaned and fell on either side, as the movement of the mob bore it.

"'*Parbleu!* these royalists would rather kneel than stand,' said a voice, as they in vain essayed to make the old man place his feet under him; and ere the laughter which this rude jest excited ceased, a cry broke forth of 'He is dead! he is dead!' and with a heavy sumph the body fell from their hands, for when their power of cruelty ended, they cared not for the corpse.

"It was true—life was extinct, none knew how—whether from the violence of the mob in its first outbreak, or that a long suffering heart had burst at last—but the cord was snapped; and he whose proud soul lately defied the countless thousands around, now slept with the dead.

"In a few seconds it seemed as though they felt that a power stronger than their own had interposed between them and their vengeance, and they stood almost aghast before the corpse, where no trace of blood proclaimed it to be their own; then rallying from this stupor, with one voice they demanded that the son should atone for the crimes of the father.

"'I am ready,' cried the youth, in a voice above the tumult. 'I did not deem I could be grateful to ye for aught, but I am for this.'

"To no purpose did the commissary propose a delay in the sentence; he was unsupported by his colleagues—the passions of the mob rose higher and higher—the thirst for blood unslaked, became intense and maddening, and they danced in frantic glee around the guillotine, while they chanted one of the demoniac songs of the scaffold.

"In this moment, when the torrent ran in one direction, Alphonse might have escaped all notice, but that the condemned youth turned to embrace him once more before he descended from the platform.

"'They are so sorry to separate, it is a shame to part them,' cried a ruffian in the crowd.

"'You forget, citizen, that this boy is his substitute,' said the commissary, mildly; 'the republic must not be cheated of its defenders.'

"'*Vive la republique!*' cried the soldiers, and the cry was re-echoed by thousands, while amid their cheers there rose the last faint sigh of an expiring victim.

"The scene was over, the crowd dispersed, and the soldiers marched back to quarters, accompanied by some hundred conscripts, among whom was Alphonse, a vague—troubled expression betokening that he scarce knew what had happened around him.

"The regiment to which he was appointed was at Toulon, and there

I followed him. They were ordered to the north of Italy soon after, and thence to Egypt. Through the battle fields of Mount Thabor and the Pyramids I was ever beside him; on the heights of Austerlitz I staunched his wounds, and I laid him beneath the earth on the field of Auerstadt."

The old man's voice trembled and became feeble as he finished speaking, and a settled expression of grief clothed his features, which were pale as death.

"I must see Sevres once more," said he, after a pause; I must look on the old houses of the village, and the little gardens, and the venerable church—they will be the only things to greet me there now, but I must gaze on them ere I close my eyes to this world and its cares."

"Come, come, father," said I, "to one who has acted so noble a part as yours, life is never without its own means of happiness."

"I spoke not of death," replied he mildly; "but the holy calm of a convent will better suit my scared and worn heart than all that the world calls its joys and pleasures. You, who are young and full of hope——"

"Alas! father, speak not thus; one can better endure the lowering skies of misfortune as the evening of life draws near, than when the morn of existence is breaking. To me, with youth and health, there is no future—no hope."

"I will not hear you speak thus," said the priest; "fatigue and weariness are on you now. Wait until to-morrow, we shall be fellow-travellers together, and then, if you will reveal to me your story, mayhap my long experience of the world may suggest comfort and consolation, where you can see neither."

The storm by this time had abated much of its violence, and across the moon the large clouds were wafted speedily, disclosing bright patches of light at every moment.

"Such is our life here," said the father, "alternating with its days of happiness and sorrow. Let us learn, then, in the dark hour of our destiny, to bear the glare of our better fortunes, for, believe me, that when our joys are greatest so are our trials also."

He ceased speaking, and I saw that soon afterwards his lips moved as if in prayer. I now laid myself down in my cloak beside the fire, and was soon buried in a sleep too sound even for a dream.

CHAPTER LXXII.

A CHANCE MEETING.

With the good priest of Sevres I journeyed along towards the frontier of France, ever selecting the least-frequented paths, and such as were not likely to be taken by the troops of soldiery which daily moved towards Berlin. The frankness of my companion had made me soon at ease with him, and I told him, without reserve, the story of my life, down to the decisive moment of my leaving the army.

"You see, father," said I, "how completely my career has failed—how, with all the ardour of a soldier, with all the devotion of a follower, I have adhered to the Emperor's fortunes—and yet——"

"Your ambition, however so great it was, could not stifle conscience. I can believe it well. They who go forth to the wars, with high hopes and bounding hearts—who picture to their minds the glorious rewards of great achievements—should blind their eyes to the horrors and injustice of the cause they bleed for. Any sympathy with misfortune would sap the very principle of that heroism, whose essence is success. Men cannot play the double game, even in matters of worldly ambition. Had you not listened to the promptings of your heart, you had been greater; had you not followed the dazzling glare of your hopes, you had been happier—both, you could scarcely be. Be assured of this, my son, the triumphs of a country can only be enjoyed by the child of the soil—the brave soldier, who lends his arm to the cause, feels he has little part in the glory."

"True, indeed—most true—I feel it."

"And were it otherwise, how unsatisfying is the thirst for that same glory—how endless the path that leads to it—how many regrets accompany it—how many ties broken—how many friendships forfeited! No, no; return to your own land—to the country of your birth—some honourable career will always present itself to him who seeks but independence, and the integrity of his own heart. Beneath the conquering eagles of the Emperor, there are men of every shade of political opinion—for the conscription is pitiless. There are Royalists, who love their king, and hate the usurper; there are Jacobins, who worship freedom, and detest the tyrant; there are stern Republicans—Vendéans, and followers of Moreau—but yet, all are Frenchmen. '*La belle France*,' is the watchword that speaks to every heart—and patriotism is the bond between thousands. *You* have no share in this. The delusion of national glory can never throw its deception around you. Return, then, to your country; and be assured that, in *her* cause your least efforts will be more ennobling to yourself, than the boldest deeds the hand of a mercenary ever achieved."

steps, however, were tottering and uncertain, his breathing hurried and difficult, and his carriage indicated the very greatest debility.

"I cannot do it, my son," said he, sinking upon the grassy bench that skirted the way; "you must leave me. It matters little now where this frail body rests; a few hours more, and the rank grass will wave above it, and the rain beat over it unfelt. Let us part here; an old man's blessing for all your kindness will follow you through life, and may cheer you to think on hereafter."

"Do you then suppose I could leave you thus?" said I reproachfully; "is it so you think of me?"

"My minutes are few now, my child," replied he more solemnly, "and I would pass the last moments of my life alone.—Well then, if you will not—leave me now for a little and return to me; by that time my mind will be calmer, and mayhap, too, my strength greater, and I may be able to accompany you to the village."

I acceded to this proposal the more willingly because it afforded me the hope of finding some means to convey him to Heimbach; and so having wrapped him carefully in my cloak, I hastened down the mountain at the top of my speed.

The zig-zag path by which I went discovered to me from time to time the lights of the little hamlet, which twinkled star-like in the valley; and as I drew nearer, the confused hum of voices reached me. I listened, and to my amazement heard the deep, hoarse bay of a trumpet. How well I knew that sound—it was the night-call to gather in the stragglers. I stopped to listen, and now, in the stillness, could mark the tramp of horsemen and the clank of their equipments; again the trumpet sounded, and was answered by another at some distance. The road lay straight below me at some hundred yards off, and, leaving the path, I dashed directly downwards just as the leading horsemen of a small detachment came slowly up. To their loud "*Qui vive*" I answered by giving an account of the sick man, and entreating the sergeant who commanded the party to lend assistance to convey him to the village.

"Yes, *parbleu*, that we will," said the honest soldier; "a priest who has made the campaign of Egypt and Austria is worthy of all our care. Where is he?"

"About a mile from this, but the road is not practicable for a horseman."

"Well, you shall have two of my men; they will soon bring him hither;" and as he spoke he ordered two troopers to dismount, who quickly disencumbering themselves of their sabres, prepared to follow me.

"We shall expect you at the bivouac," cried the sergeant, as he resumed his way, while I, eager to return, breasted the mountain with renewed energy.

"You belong to the guard, my friends," said I, as I paused for breath at a turn of the path.

"The fourth cuirassiers of the guard," replied the soldier I addressed—"Milhaud's brigade."

How my heart leaped as he said these words. They were part of the division General D'Auvergne once commanded—it was the regiment of poor Pioche, too, before the dreadful day of Austerlitz.

"You know the fourth, then?" rejoined the man, as he witnessed the agitation of my manner.

"Know the fourth?" echoed his comrade in a voice of half indignant meaning—"*sacrebleu!* who does not know them?—does not all the world know them by this time?"

"It is the fourth who wear the motto '*dix contre un*,' on their caps," said I, desirous to flatter the natural vanity of my companions.

"Yes, Monsieur, I see you have served also."

I answered by a nod, for already every word, every gesture recalled to me the career I had quitted; and my regrets, so late subdued by reason and reflection, came thronging back, and filled my heart to bursting.

Hurrying onward now, I mounted the steep path, and soon regained the spot I sought. The poor father was sleeping; overcome by fatigue and weariness, he had fallen on the mossy bank, and lay in a deep, soft slumber. Lifting him gently, the strong troopers crossed their hands beneath, and bore him along between them. For an instant he looked up; but seeing me at his side, he merely pressed my hand, and closed his eyes again.

"*Ma foi!*" said one of the dragoons in a low voice, "I should not be surprised if this were the Père Arséne who served with the army in Italy. We used to call him old 'Scapulaire.' He was the only priest I ever saw in the van of a brigade. You knew him too, Auguste."

"Yes, that I did," replied the other soldier; "I saw him at Elkankah, where one of ours was unhorsed by a Mameluke, spring forward, and, seizing a pistol at the holster, shoot the Turk through the head, and then kneel down beside the dying man he was with before, and go on with his prayers. *Ventre bleu!* that's what I call discipline."

"Where was that, comrade?"

"At Elkankah."

"At Quoreyn rather, my friend, two leagues to the southward," whispered a low voice.

"*Tonnerre de ciel!*" cried the two soldiers in a breath, "it is himself;" for the words were spoken by the priest, who was no other than the Père Arséne they spoke of. The effort of speech and memory was, however, a mere passing one; for to all their questions he was now deaf, and lay apparently unconscious between them. On me therefore they turned their inquiries, but with little more of success; and thus we descended the mountain, eager to reach some place of succour for the good father.

As we approached the village, I was soon made aware of the objects of the party who occupied it. The little street was crowded with cattle, bullocks, and sheep, fast wedged up amid huge wagons of forage and carts of corn, mounted dragoons urging on the jaded

animals, regardless of the angry menaces or the impatient appeals incessantly making by the peasantry, who in great numbers had followed their stock from their farms.

The soldiers, who were detachments of different corps, were also quarrelling among themselves for their share of the spoil; and these altercations, in which more than once I saw a sabre flash, added to the discord. It was indeed a scene of tumult and confusion almost inconceivable. Here were a party of cuirassiers, carbine in hand, protecting a drove of sheep, around which the country people were standing, seemingly irresolute whether they should essay an attack, a movement often prompted by the other soldiers, who hoped in the *melée* to seize a part of the prey. Many of the oxen were bestrode by hussars or lancers, whose gay trappings formed a strange contrast with the beasts they rode on; while more than one stately horseman held a sheep before him on the saddle, for whose protection a cocked pistol seemed no ineffectual guarantee.

The task of penetrating this dense and turbulent mob seemed to me almost impossible; and I expressed my fears to the soldiers; but they replied that there were too many "braves" of Egypt there not to remember the Père Arséne—saying which, one of the soldiers, whispering a word to his companion, laid the priest gently upon the ground, and then mounting rapidly on a forage-cart, he shouted, in a voice heard above the din, "Comrades of the fourth, we have found an old companion—the Père Scapulaire is here. Place for the good father—place there!"

A hundred loud vivas welcomed this announcement, for the name was well known to many who never had seen the priest; and cheer after cheer for the "Bon Père" now rung through this motley assemblage.

To the wild confusion of a moment before, the regularity of discipline at once succeeded, and a lane was quickly formed for the soldiers to advance with the priest between them, each horseman saluting as he passed, as if to his general on parade.

"To the Trauben—the Trauben," cried several voices as we went along; and this I learned was the little inn of the village, where the non-commissioned officers in charge of the several parties were seated in council to arrange the subdivision of the booty.

Had not a feeling stronger than mere personal consideration occupied me, I would have now left the good priest among his old comrades, with whom he was certain to meet kindness and protection; but I could not so readily part with one whom, even in the few hours of our intercourse, I had learned to like; and therefore, enduring as well as I was able the rugged insubordination of a soldiery free from the restraint of discipline, I followed on, and soon found myself at the door of the Trauben.

A dismounted dragoon, with drawn sword, guarded the entrance, around which a group of angry peasants were gathered, loudly protesting against the robbery of their flocks and farm-yards. It was with great difficulty I could persuade the sentry to suffer me to enter; and when I at last succeeded, I found none willing to pay any attention to

my request regarding a billet for the priest, for unhappily his name and character were unknown to those to whom I addressed myself. In this dilemma I was deliberating what step to take, when one of the soldiers who with such zealous devotion had never left us, came up to say that his corporal had just given up his own quarters for the good father's use; and this happily was a small summer-house in the garden at the back of the inn.

"He cannot come with us himself," said the soldier, "for he is engaged with the forage rations, but I have got his leave to take the quarters."

A small wicket beside the inn led us into a large wildly-grown orchard, through which a broad path led to the summer-house in question—at least such we guessed to be the little building from whose windows there gleamed the bright glare of a cheerful fire.

The door lay open into a little hall, from which two doors led into different chambers. Over one of these was marked in chalk "quartier general," in imitation of the title assigned to a general's quarters, and this the soldiers pronounced must belong to the corporal. I opened it accordingly and entered. The room was small and neatly furnished, and with the blazing wood upon the hearth, looked most comfortable and inviting.

"Yes, we are all right here—I know his helmet, this is it," said the dragoon, "so here we must leave you. You'll tell the good father it was two troopers of the fourth who carried him hither, won't ye? Ay, and say Auguste Prevot was one of them—he'll know the name; he nursed me in a fever I had in Italy."

"I wish he were able to give me his blessing again," said the other; "I had it before that affair at Brescia, and there were four of my comrades killed about me, and never a shot touched me. But good night, comrade, good night;" and so saying, having left the father at his length upon a couch, they made their military salute and departed.

A rude-looking flagon of beer which stood on the table was the only thing I could discover in the chamber, save a canvas bag of tobacco and some pipes. I filled a goblet with the liquor and placed it to the priest's lips: he swallowed a little of it, and then opening his eyes, slowly looked around him, while he murmured to my question a faint sound of "better, much better." I knew enough of such matters to be aware that perfect rest and repose were the greatest aids to his recovery, and so, replenishing the fire, I threw myself down on the large dragoon cloak which lay on the floor, and prepared to pass my night where I was.

The long-drawn breathings of the sleeping man, the perfect quiet and stillness of all around—for, though not far distant from the village, the thick wood of trees intercepted every sound from that quarter—and my fatigue combined, soon brought on drowsiness.

I struggled, so long as I was able, against the tendency, but a humming sound filled my ears, the objects grew fainter before my vision, and I sank into that half-dreamy state when consciousness remains, but clouded and indistinct in all its perceptions. Twice the door was

opened and some persons entered, but though they spoke loudly, I heard not their words, nor could I recognise their appearance; to this succeeded a deep, sound sleep, the recompense of great fatigue.

The falling of a piece of fire-wood on the hearth awoke me—I opened my eyes and looked about. The room had no other light than from the embers of the wood fire and the piece of blazing pine which had just fallen, but even by that uncertain glare I could see enough to amaze and confuse me.

On the couch where I had left the priest sleeping, the old man was now seated, his head uncovered, and a scarf of light blue silk across his shoulders and falling to his feet; before him, and kneeling, was a figure, of which for some minutes I in vain endeavoured to ascertain the traits, for while in the military air of the dress there was something to mark the soldier, a waving mass of hair loosely falling on the back bespoke another sex. While I yet doubted, the flickering flame burst forth and showed me the small and beautifully shaped foot which from beneath a loose trowser peeped forth, and in the neat boot and tastefully ornamented spur, I recognized in an instant it was a "Vivandiere" of the army —one of those who, amid all the reckless abandon of the life of camps and battle-fields, can yet preserve some vestige of coquetry and feminine grace.

So strange the sight—so complete the heavy stupor of my faculties, that again and again I doubted whether the whole might not be the creation of a dream; but the well-known tones of the old man's voice soon reassured me, as I heard him say—

"I know it too, my child; I have followed too long the fortunes of an army not to feel and to sorrow for these things, but be comforted."

A passionate burst of tears from her who knelt at his feet interrupted him here, nor did it seem that all he could speak of consolation was able to assuage the deep sorrow of the poor girl, whose trembling frame bespoke her agony.

By degrees, however, she grew calmer—a deep sob or a long-drawn sigh alone would be heard, as the venerable father with impassioned eloquence depicted the happiness of those who sought the blessings of religion, and could tear themselves from the world and its ambitions; warming with his theme, he descanted on the lives of those saints on earth, whose every minute was an offering of heavenly love; and contrasted the holy calm of a convent with the wild revelry of the camp, or the more revolting carnage of the battle-field.

"Speak not of these things, father; your own voice trembles with proud emotion at the mention of glorious war. Tell me, oh! tell me that I may have hope, and yet leave not all that makes life endurable."

The old man spoke again, but his tones were low, and his words seemed a reproof, for she bowed her head between her hands and sobbed heavily.

To the long and impassioned appeal of the priest, there now succeeded a silence, only broken by the deep-drawn sighs of her who knelt in sadness and penitence before him.

"And his name?" said the father; "you have not told his name."

A pause followed, in which not even a breathing was heard—then a low murmuring sound came, and it seemed to me, as though I heard my own name uttered—I started at the sound, and with the noise the "Vivandiere" sprang to her feet.

"I heard a noise there," said she resolutely.

"It is my companion of the journey," said the priest, "poor fellow, he is tired and weary—he sleeps soundly."

"I did not know you had a fellow-traveller, father."

"Yes, we met in the Creutz Mountains—and, since that, have wended our way together. A soldier——"

"A soldier! is he wounded, then?"

"No, my child—he is leaving the army."

"Leaving the army, and not wounded—he is old and disabled, perhaps."

"Neither—he is both young and vigorous."

"Shame on him, then, that he turn his back on fame and fortune—and leave the path that brave men tread. He never was a soldier. No, father. He, in whose heart the noble passion once has lived, can never forget it."

"Hush, child, hush!" said the priest, motioning with his hand to her, to be silent.

"Let me look on him," said the Vivandiere, as she stooped down, and took from the hearth a piece of lighted wood—"let me see this man—and learn the features of one, who can be so craven of spirit, so poor of heart, as to fly the field—while thousands are flocking towards it."

Burning with shame and indignation, I arose, just as she approached me. The pine branch threw its red gleam over her bright uniform, and then upon her face. "Minette! Minette!" I exclaimed, but with a wild shriek, she let fall the burning wood, and fell senseless to the ground.

It was some time before, with all our care, she recovered consciousness—and even then, in her wild, excited glance, one might read the struggles of her mind to credit what had occurred. A few broken, unconnected phrases would escape her at intervals, and she seemed labouring to regain the lost clue to her recollections—when, again, she turned her eyes towards me. At the same instant, the trumpet sounded without, for *reveillée*, and was answered by many a call from other parties around. With a steadfast gaze of wonderment she fixed her look on me—and twice passed her hands across her eyes, as though she doubted the evidence of her senses.

"Minette, hear me, let me speak but one word."

"There it is again," cried she, as the blast rang out a second time, and the clatter of horsemen resounded from the street. "Adieu, sir, our roads lie not together. Father, your blessing—if your good counsel, this night, has not made its way to my heart—the lesson has come elsewhere. Good-by! good-by!" She pressed the old man's hand to her lips, and darted from the room.

Stunned, and like one spell-bound, I could not move for a few seconds—and then, with a wild cry, I bounded after her through the garden. The wicket, however, was fastened on the outside, and it was some time before I could scale the wall, and reach the street.

The day was just breaking, but already the village was thronged with soldiers, who were preparing for the march, and arranging their parties to conduct the wagons. Hurrying on through the crowded and confused mass, I looked on every side for the "Vivandiere," but in vain. Groups of different regiments passed and repassed me—but to my questions they returned either a jeering reply, or a mere laugh of derision. But a few days ago, thought I, and these fellows had scarce dared to address me—and now——. Oh! the blighting misery of that thought—I was no longer a soldier—the meanest horseman of his troop was my superior. I passed through the village, and reached the high road: before me was a party of dragoons, escorting a drove of cattle—I hastened after them, but on coming near, discovered they were a light cavalry detachment. Sick at heart, I leaned against a tree at the way-side—when again I heard the tramp of horses approaching—I looked, and saw the tall helmets of the fourth, who were coming slowly along, conducting some large wagons, drawn by eight or ten horses. In front of the detachment rode a man, whose enormous stature made him at once remarkable, as well as the air of soldierly bearing he displayed; beside him was Minette—the reins had fallen on her horse's neck, and her face was buried in her hands.

"Ah! if I had thought that priest would have made thee so sad, Mademoiselle, I'd have let him spend his night beneath a wagon, rather than in my quarters," said a deep hollow voice, I at once recognized as that of Pioche. "But the morning air will revive thee; so let us forward—by threes—open order—trot." The word was obeyed—the heavy tramp of the horses, with the dull roll of the wagons, drowned all other sounds—the cortege moved on, and I was alone.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE "PENSION DE LA RUE MI-CAREME."

When I returned to the garden, I found that the Père Arséne was seized by an access of that dreadful malady, whose intervals of comparative release are but periods of dread or despondence. The tertian of Egypt, so fatal among the French troops, now numbered him among its victims—and he looked worn and exhausted, like one after weeks of illness.

My first care was to present myself to the official, whose business it was to inspect the passports, and by explaining the condition of my poor friend, to entreat permission to delay my journey—at least until he should be somewhat recovered. The gruff old sergeant, however, deliberately examined my passport, and as rigidly decided that I could not remain. The words of the minister were clear and definite—"Day by day, without halt, to the nearest frontier of France," was the direction—and with this I must comply. In vain I assured him, that no personal convenience, no wish of my own, urged the request, but the duty of humanity towards a fellow-traveller, and one who had strong claims on every soldier of the empire.

"Leave him to me, Monsieur," was the only reply I could obtain; and the utmost favour he would grant, was the permission to take leave of my poor friend before I started.

Amid all the sufferings of his malady, I found the good priest dwelling in his mind on the scene with the "Vivandiere"—which, perhaps from the impressionable character of a sick man's temperament, had entirely filled his thoughts—and thus he wandered from the subject of his own sorrows to hers, with scarcely a transition between them. When I mentioned the necessity of our parting, he seemed to feel it more on my account than his own.

"I wished to have reached Paris with you," he repeated over and over. "It was not impossible I could have arranged your return home. But you must go down to Sevres—the priest there, whoever he may be, will know of me—tell him every thing without reserve. I am too ill to write, but if I get better soon——. Well, well, that poor girl is an orphan too—and Alphonse was an orphan. With what misery have we struggled in France since this man has ruled our destinies—how have the crimes of a people brought their retribution to every heart and every home!—none too low, none too humble, to feel them. Leave this land, no blessing can rest upon it now. Poor thing, how worthy of a better lot she is. If this same officer should know—it is not impossible—but, why do I say this? No, no; you'll never meet him now." He continued to mutter thus some broken and disjointed sentences, half aloud, for some minutes—apparently unconscious of my presence.

"He was in a regiment of the guard—alas, she told me which, but I forget it now—but his name, surely I remember his name. Well, well, it is a sad story. Adieu, my dear child—good by; we have each a weary road before us—but *my* journey, although the longest, will be soonest accomplished. Do not forget my words to you—your own country, and your country's cause, above every other—all else is the hireling's part; the sense of duty alone can sustain a man in the trials which fit him for this world, or that better one which is to follow. Adieu." He threw his arm around me as he said this, and leaned exhausted and faint upon my shoulder.

The few who journey through life with little sympathy or friendship from their fellow-men, may know how it rent my heart to part with one to whom I clung every hour closer; my throat swelled and throbbed, and I could only articulate a faint good-by as we parted. As the door was closing, I heard his voice again.

"Yes; I have it now—I remember it well—'Le Capitaine Burke.'"

I started in amazement, for during all our intercourse he had never asked, nor had I told my name—and I stood unable to speak, when he continued—

"You'll think of the name. She said, too, he was on the staff—'Burke'—poor girl."

I did not wait for more, but like one flying from some dreaded enemy I rushed through the garden, and gained the road—my heart torn with many a conflicting thought; the bitterest of all, being the memory of Minette, the orphan girl, who alone of all the world cared for me. Oh! if strong, deep-rooted affection—the love of a whole heart, can raise the spirit above the every-day contentions of the world—can ennoble thought, refine sentiments, and divest life of all its meaner traits, making a path of flowers among the rocks and briars of our worldly pilgrimage—so does the possession of affection, for which we cannot give requital, throw a gloom over the soul, for which there is no remedy. Better, a thousand times better, had I borne all the solitary condition of my lot, unrelieved by one token of regard, than think of her who had wrecked her fortunes on my own.

With many a sad thought I plodded onward—the miles passed over seemed like the events in some troubled dream—and of my journey I have not a recollection remaining. It was late in the evening when I reached the *Barriere de l'Etoile*, and entered Paris. The long lines of lamps along the quays—the glittering reflection in the calm river—the subdued, but continual hum of a great city—awoke me from my reverie, and I bethought me that my career of life must now begin anew, and all my energies must be called on, to fashion out my destiny.

On the morning after my arrival I presented myself, in compliance with the requisite form, before the minister of police. Little information of mine was necessary to explain the circumstances under which I was placed. He was already thoroughly acquainted with the whole, and seemed in no wise disposed to evince any undue lenity towards one who had voluntarily quitted the service of the Emperor.

"Where do you purpose to remain, sir?" said the prefet, as he concluded a lengthened and searching scrutiny of my appearance.

"In Paris," I replied briefly.

"In Paris, I suppose," said he, with a slight derisive curl of the lip—"of that, I should think there can be little doubt; but I wished to ascertain more accurately your address—in what part of the city."

"As yet, I cannot tell—I am almost a stranger here; a day or two will, however, enable me to choose—and then I shall return here with the intelligence."

"That is sufficient, sir—I shall expect to see you soon." He waved his hand in sign to me to withdraw, and I was but too happy to follow the indication. As I hastened down the stairs, and forced my way through the crowd of persons who awaited an audience with the prefet, I heard a voice close to my ear whisper, "A word, one word with you, Monsieur;" conceiving, however, it could not have been intended for me, to whom no face there was familiar, I passed on, and reached the court.

The noise of footsteps rapidly moving on the gravel behind me induced me to turn, and I beheld a small, miserably-dressed man, whose spare and wasted form bespoke the sorest trials of poverty, advancing towards me, hat in hand. "Will you deign me one word, Monsieur?" said he, in a voice, whose tone, however that of entreaty, was yet remote from the habitual accent of one asking alms.

"You must mistake me," said I, desirous to pass on, "I am unknown to you."

"True, sir—but it is as a stranger I take the liberty of addressing you. I heard you say, just now, that you had not fixed on any place of abode in Paris; now, if I might venture to entreat your preference for this establishment, it would be too much honour for me, its poor master."

Here he placed in my hands a small card, inscribed with the words, "*Pension Bourgeois, Rue de Mi-Carême, Boulevard Mont Parnasse, No.* 46," at top; and beneath was a paragraph, setting forth the economical fact—that a man might eat, drink, and sleep, for the sum of twelve francs a week—enjoying the delights of "agreeable society, pleasant environs, and all the advantages of a country residence."

It was with difficulty I could avoid a smile at the shivering figure who ventured to present himself as an inducement to try the fare of his house. Whether my eyes did wander from the card to his countenance, or any other gesture of mine betrayed my thoughts—the old man seemed to divine what was passing in my mind, and said—

"Monsieur will not pronounce on the '*Pension*,' from the humble guise of its master. Let him but try it—and I promise that these poor rags, this miserable figure, has no type within the walls."

There was a tone of deep dejection, mingled with a sense of conscious pride, in which he said these few words, that at once decided me not to grieve him by a refusal.

"You may count on me, then, Monsieur," said I; "my stay here

is so far uncertain, that it depends not altogether on myself—but for the present I am your guest." I took my purse from my pocket as I spoke, knowing the custom in these humbler boarding-houses was to pay in advance—but the old man reddened slightly, and motioned with his hand a refusal.

"Monsieur is a captain in the guards," said he proudly, "no more is necessary."

"You mistake, friend, I am no longer so—I have left the army."

"Left it, *en retraite?*" said he, inquiringly.

"Not so. Left it at my own free-will and choice—and now, perhaps, I had better tell you, that as I may not enjoy any considerable share of good-will from the police authorities here—my presence might be less acceptable to your other guests, or to yourself."

The old man's eyes sparkled as I spoke, and his lips moved rapidly, as though he were speaking to himself—then, taking my hand, he pressed it to his lips, and said—

"Monsieur could not be more welcome than at present. Shall we expect you to-day at dinner?"

"Be it so. Your hour?"

"Four o'clock—to the moment. Do not forget the number, 46—Monsieur Rubichon—the house with a large garden in front."

"Till then," said I, bowing to my host, whose ceremonious politeness made me feel my own salute an act of rudeness in comparison.

As I parted from the old man, I was glad at the relief to my own thoughts which even thus much of speculation afforded, and sauntered on, fancying many a strange conceit about the *Pension*, and its inhabitants. At last the hour drew near; and having placed my few effects in a cabriolet, I set out for the distant boulevard of Mount Parnasse.

I remarked with pleasure that as we went along, the streets and thoroughfares became gradually less and less crowded: scarcely a carriage of any kind was to be met with. The shops were, for the most part, the quiet, unpretending looking places one sees in a provincial town; and an air of peacefulness and retirement prevailed, strongly at variance with the clamour and din of the heart of the capital. This was more than ever so as we emerged upon the boulevard itself; on one side of which, houses, at long, straggling intervals, alone were to be seen; at the other, the country lay open to the view, with its orchards and gardens, for miles away.

"Saperlote," said the driver, who, like so many of his calling, was a blunt son of Alsace—"Saperlote; we have come to the end of the world here. How do you call the strange street you are looking for?"

"The 'Rue de Mi-Carême.'"

"Mi-Carême? I'd rather you lived there than me. That name does not promise much in regard to good feeding. Can this be it?"

As he spoke he pointed with his whip to a narrow, deserted-looking street, which opened from the boulevard. The houses were old and dilapidated, but stood in small gardens, and seemed like the remains

of the villa residences of the Parisians, in times long past. A few more modern edifices, flaring with red brick fronts, were here and there scattered amongst them; but, for all the decay and dismantlement of the others, they seemed like persons of rank and condition in the company of their inferiors.

Few of the larger houses were inhabited. Large placards, "a louer," on the gateways or the broken railings of the garden, set forth the advantages of a handsome residence, situated between court and garden; but the falling roofs and broken windows were in sad discordance with the eulogy.

The unaccustomed noise of wheels, as we went along, drew many to the doors to stare at us, and in the gathering groups I could mark the astonishment so rare a spectacle as a cabriolet afforded in these secluded parts.

"Is this the 'Rue Mi-Carême?'" said the driver to a boy, who stood gazing in perfect wonderment at our equipage.

"Yes," muttered the child—"yes. Who are you come for now?"

"Come for, my little man? Not for any one. What do you mean by that?"

"I thought it was the *Commissaire*," said the boy.

"Ah, Sapermint! I knew we were in a droll neighbourhood," murmured the driver. "It would seem they never see a cabriolet here, except when it brings the *Commissaire de Police* to look after some one."

If this reflection did not tend to allay my previous doubts upon the nature of the locality, it certainly aided to excite my curiosity, and I was determined to persist in my resolution of at least seeing the interior of the "*Pension*."

"Here we are at last," cried the driver, throwing down his whip on the horse's back, as he sprung to the ground, and read aloud from a board fastened to a tree, "'Pension Bourgeois. M. Rubichon, Propriétaire.' Shall I wait for Monsieur?"

"No. Take out that portmanteau and cloak. I'm not going back now."

A stare of most undisguised astonishment was the only reply he made, as he took forth my baggage, and placed it at the little gate.

"You'll be coming home at night," said he at length; "shall I come to fetch you?——Not to-night," repeated he, in amazement. "Well, adieu, Monsieur—you know best; but I'd not come a pleasuring up here, if I was a young fellow like you."

As he drove away, I turned to look at the building before me, which, up to this time, I had not sufficiently noted. It was a long, two-storied house, which evidently, at an early period, had been a mansion of no mean pretension. The pilasters which ornamented the windows, the balustrades of the parapet, and the pediment above the entrance, were still remaining, though in a dilapidated condition. The garden in front showed also some signs of that quaint taste, originally borrowed from the Dutch, and the yew trees still preserved some faint resemblance to the beasts and animals after which they had once been

fashioned, though time and growth had altered the outlines, and given to many a goodly lion or stag, the bristly coat of a porcupine.

A little fountain, which spouted from a sea-monster's nostrils, was grass-grown and choked with weeds. Every thing betokened neglect and ruin; even the sun-dial had fallen across the walk, and lay moss-grown and forgotten, as though to say, that Time had no need of a record there.

The *jalousies*, which were closed in every window, permitted no view of the interior; nor did any thing, save a faint curl of light blue smoke from one chimney, give token of habitation.

I could not help smiling to myself at the absurd fancy which had suffered me to feel that this deserted quarter, this lonesome dwelling, contained any thing either adventurous or strange about it, or that I should find either in the "*Pension*," or its guests, wherewithal to interest or amuse me. With this thought I opened the wicket, and crossing the garden, pulled the bell-rope that hung beside the door.

The deep clanging echoed again and again to my summons, and ere it ceased, the door was opened, and M. Rubichon himself stood before me. No longer, however, the M. Rubichon of the morning, in garments of worn and tattered poverty, but attired in a suit which, if threadbare, was at least clean and respectable looking: a white vest, and ruffles also, added to the air of neatness of his costume; and whether from his own deserts, or my surprise at the transformation, he seemed to me to possess the look and bearing of a true gentleman.

Having welcomed me with the well-bred and easy politeness of one who knew the habits of society, he gave orders to a servant girl to conduct me to a room, adding, "May I beg of Monsieur to make a rapid toilet, for the dinner will be served in less than ten minutes."

The M. Rubichon of the morning no more prepared me for that gentleman at evening, than did the ruinous exterior of the dwelling for the neat and comely chamber into which I was now installed. The articles of furniture were few, but scrupulously clean; and the white curtains of the little bed, the cherry wood chairs, the table, with its grey marble top—all were the perfection of that propriety which gives even to humble things a look of elegance.

I had but time to make a slight change in my dress when the bell sounded for dinner, and at the same instant a gentle knock came to my door. It was M. Rubichon, come to conduct me to the *salle*, and anxious to know if I were satisfied with my chamber.

"In summer, Monsieur, if we shall have the happiness of possessing you here at that season, the view of the garden is delightful from this window; and—you have not noticed it, of course—but there is a little stair, which descends from the window into the garden, which you will find a great convenience, when you wish to walk. This way, now.—We are a small party to-day, and indeed shall be for a few weeks.—What name shall I have the honour to announce?"

"Mr. Burke."

"Ah! an Irish name," said he, smiling as he threw open the door of a spacious, but simply furnished apartment, in which about a dozen

persons were standing or sitting around the stove. I could not help remarking, that, as Monsieur Rubichon presented me to his other guests, my name seemed to meet a kind of recognition from each in turn. My host perceived this, and explained it at once, by saying, "We have a namesake of yours amongst us—not exactly at this moment, for he is in Normandy—but he will be back in a week or so. Madame de Langeac, let me present Mr. Burke."

Monsieur Rubichon's guests were all persons somewhat advanced in life—and though, in their dress, evincing a most unvarying simplicity and economy, had yet a look of habitual good tone and breeding which could not be mistaken. Among these, the lady to whom I was now introduced, was conspicuous—and in her easy and graceful reception of me, showed the polished manners of one accustomed to the best society.

After some few half-jesting observations, expressive of surprise that a young man—and consequently, as she deemed, a gay one—should have selected as his residence an unvisited quarter, and a very retired house—she took my arm, and proceeded to the dinner room.

The dinner itself, and the table equipage, were in keeping with the simplicity of the whole establishment; but if the fare was humble, and the wine of the very cheapest, all the habitudes of the very highest society presided at the meal, and the polished ease and elegance, so eminently the gift of ancient French manners, were conspicuous.

There prevailed among the guests all the intimacy of a large family, at the same time, a most courteous deference was remarkable, which never approached familiarity—and thus they talked lightly and pleasantly together, of mutual friends, and places they had visited—no allusion ever being made to the popular topics of the day—to me a most inexplicable circumstance, and one which I could not avoid slightly expressing my astonishment upon to the lady beside me.

She smiled significantly at my remark, and merely said, "It is so agreeable to discuss matters where there can be no great difference of opinion—at least, no more than sharpens the wit of the speakers—that you will rarely hear other subjects talked of here."

"But have the great events which are yet passing no interest?"

"Perhaps they interest too deeply to admit of much discussion," said she, with some earnestness of manner—"but I am myself transgressing—and what is still worse, losing you the observations of Monsieur de Saint George on Madame de Sevigné."

The remark was evidently made to change the current of our conversation—and so I accepted it—listening to the chit-chat around me, which, from its novelty alone, possessed a most uncommon charm to my ears. It was so strange, to hear the allusions to the courtiers, and the beauties of by-gone days, made with all the freshness of yesterday acquaintance—and the stores of anecdotes about the court of Louis XV., and the regency, told with a piquancy that made the event seem like an occurrence of the morning.

Before we retired to the drawing-room for coffee, I saw that the *Pension* was a royalist establishment—and wondered how it happened

that I should have been selected by the host to make one of his guests. Yet, unquestionably, there seemed no reserve towards me—on the contrary, each evinced a tone of frankness and cordiality which made me perfectly at ease, and well satisfied at the fortune which led me to the Rue Mi-Carême.

The little parties of dominos and picquet scattered through the salon—some formed groups to converse—the ladies resumed their embroidery—and all the occupations of in-door life were assumed with a readiness that betokened habit, and gave to the *Pension* the comfortable air of a home.

Thus passed the first evening. The next morning, the party assembled at an early hour to breakfast—after which, the gentlemen went out, and did not appear until dinner time—day succeeding day, in unvarying, but, to me, not unpleasing monotony. I rarely wandered from the large wilderness of a garden near the house, and saw weeks pass over, without a thought ever occurring to me that life must not thus be suffered to ebb.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

MY NAMESAKE.

About a month after I came to live in the *Pension*, I was sitting one evening at the window—watching, with the interest an idle man will ever attach to slight things, the budding leaves of an early spring—when I heard a step approach my chair, and on turning my head, perceived Madame de Langeac—she carried her tabouret in her hand, and came slowly towards me.

"I am come to steal some of your sunshine, Monsieur Burke," said the old lady, smiling good-naturedly, as I rose to present a chair, "but not to drive you away, if you will be generous enough to keep me company."

I stammered out some common-place civility in reply, and was silent—for my thoughts were bent upon my future, and I was ill disposed to interruption.

"You are fond of flowers, I have remarked," continued she—as if perceiving my pre-occupation, and willing to relieve it, by taking the burthen of the conversation. "And it is a taste I love to witness—it seems to me like the evidence of a homely habit. It is only in childhood we learn this love—we may cultivate it in after life, as we will."

"My mother was passionately fond of them," said I, calling up a long-buried memory of home and kindred.

"I thought so. These simple tastes are the inheritance a mother gives her child—and, happily, they survive every change of fortune."

I sighed heavily as she spoke—for thus, accidentally, was touched the weakest cord of my heart.

"And better still," resumed she—"they are the links that unite us to the past—that bind the heart of manhood to infancy—that can bring down pride and haughtiness—and call forth guileless affection, and childlike faith."

"They are happy," said I, musing, "who can mingle such early memories with the present."

"And who cannot?" interrupted she, rapidly—"who has not felt the love of parents—the halo of a home? Old as I am, even I can recall the little walks I trod in infancy, and the hand that used to guide me—I can bring up the very tones of that voice, which vibrated on my heart as they spoke my name. But, how much happier they, to whom these memories are linked with tokens of present affection—and who, in their manhood's joys, can feel a father's or a mother's love."

"I was left an orphan, when a mere child," said I, as though the observation had been specially addressed to me.

"But you have brothers—sisters, perhaps."

I shook my head. "A brother, indeed—but we have never met since we were children."

"And yet your country has not suffered the dreadful convulsion of ours; no social wreck has scattered those who once lived in close affection together. It is sad, when such ties are broken. You came early to France, I think you told me."

"Yes, Madame. When a mere child, my heart conceived a kind of devotion to the Emperor—his fame, his great exploits, seeming something more than human, filled every thought of my brain—and to be a soldier, *his* soldier, was the limit of my ambition. I fancied, too, that the cause he asserted was that of freedom—that liberty, universal liberty, was the watchword that led to victory."

"And you have discovered your error," interrupted she. "Alas! it were better to have followed the illusion—a faith, once shaken, leaves an unsettled spirit—and with such, there is little energy."

"And less of hope," said I, despondingly.

"Not so, if there be youth. Come, you must tell me your story. It is from no mere curiosity I ask you—but that I have seen much of the world, and am better able than you to offer counsel and advice. I have remarked, for some time past, that you appear to have no acquaintance in Paris—no friend. Let me be such. If the confidence have no other result, it will relieve your heart of some portion of its burthen—besides, the others here will learn to regard you with less distrust."

"And is such their feeling towards me?"

"Forgive me; I did not exactly use the word I sought for—but now that I have ventured so far, I may as well confess that you are an object of the greatest interest in their eyes—nor can they divest themselves of the impression, that some deep-laid plot had led you hither."

"Had I known this before——"

"You had left us—I guessed as much. I have remarked it in your character already, that a morbid dread of being suspected is ever uppermost in your thoughts—and accounted for it by supposing that you might have been thrown at too early an age into life—but you must not feel angry with us here. As for me, I have no merit in my right appreciation of you—Monsieur Rubichon told me how you met—a mere accident, at the Bureau of the Prefet."

"It was such—nor have I been able to divine why he addressed himself to me, nor what circumstance could have led him to believe my sentiments in accordance with those of his guests."

"Simple enough the reason—he heard from your own lips you were a stranger, without any acquaintance in Paris. The police, for a time, have been somewhat frequent in their visits here—when the exclusively royalist feature of the *Pension* excited some dissatisfaction. To overcome the impression, M. Rubichon determined to wait each day at the Bureau of the Prefet, and solicit, at hazard, among the persons there, to patronize his house. We all here consented to the plan, feeling its necessity. Our good fortune sent us you. Still, you must not be surprised, if long sorrows and much suffering have engendered suspicion—nor, that the old followers of a king look distrustfully on the soldier of"——she hesitated, and blushed slightly—then added, in a low voice, "of the Emperor." The word seemed to have cost a pang in its utterance, for she did not speak for several minutes after.

"And these gentlemen—am I to conclude that they cherish disaffection to the present government, or harbour a hope of its downfall?" Whether some accidental expression of disdain escaped me as I said this, I cannot say—but Madame de Langeac quickly replied—

"They are good Frenchmen, sir, and loyal gentlemen—what they *hope*, must be a matter for their own hearts."

"I entreat your pardon, Madame, if I have said one syllable which could reflect upon their motives."

"I forgive you readily," said she, smiling courteously: "he who has worn a sabre so long, may well deem its influence all-powerful; but believe me, young man, there is that within the heart of a nation, against which mere force is nothing: opposed to it armed squadrons and dense ranks are powerless. Devotion to a sovereign, whose claim comes hallowed by a long line of kings, is a faith to which religion lends its sanction, and tradition its hope. Look on these very persons here; see has adversity chilled their affection, or poverty damped their ardour. You know them not, but I will tell you who they are. There at the fire, that venerable old man with the high bold forehead, he is Monsieur De Plessis—Count Plessis de Riancourt. His grandfather entertained Louis XIV. and his suite within his chateau; he himself was grand falconer to the king; and what is he now? I shame to speak it—a fencing-master at an humble school of the Faubourg. And the other opposite to him—he is stooping to pick something from the floor—I myself saw him kneel at the levee of his majesty, and beheld the king assist him to rise, as he said—'Monsieur De Maurepas, I

would make you a duke, but that no title could be so dear to a Maurepas as that his ancestors have borne for six hundred years.' And he, whose signature was but inferior to the royal command, copies pleadings of a lawyer to earn his support. And that tall man yonder, who has just risen from the table, neither years nor poverty have erased the stamp of nobility from his graceful figure—Count Felix D'Ancelot, Captain of the *Guard du Corps*—the same who was left for dead on the stairs at Versailles, pierced by eleven wounds; he gives lessons in drawing, two leagues from this, at the other extremity of Paris. You ask me if they hope—what else than hope—what other comforter could make such men as these live on in want and indigence declining every proffer of advancement—refusing every temptation that should warp their allegiance? I have read of great deeds of your Emperor—I have heard traits of heroism of his generals, compared to which the famed actions of the Crusaders paled away; but tell me if you think that all the glory ever won by gallant soldier, tried the courage, or tested the stout heart like the long struggle of such men as these. And here, if I mistake not, comes another not inferior to any."

As she spoke, the steps of a calèche at the door were suddenly lowered, and a tall and powerfully-built man stepped lightly out. In an instant we heard his footstep in the hall, and in another moment, the door of the *salon* opened, and M. Rubichon announced "Le General Count Burke."

The general had just time to divest himself of his travelling pelisse as he entered, and was immediately surrounded by the others, who welcomed him with the greatest enthusiasm.

"Madame La Marquise de Langeac," said he, approaching the old lady, as she sat in the recess of the window, and lifted her hand to his lips, "I am overjoyed to see you in such health. I passed three days with your amiable cousin, Arnold de Rambuteau; who, like yourself, enjoys the happiest temperament, and the most gifted mind."

"If you flatter thus, general," said Madame De Langeac, "my young friend here will scarcely recognize in you a countryman—a kinsman, perhaps. Let me present Mr. Burke."

The general's face flushed, and his eyes sparkled, as taking my hand in both of his own, he said—

"Are you indeed from Ireland? Is your name Burke? Alas! that I cannot speak one word of English to you. I left my country thirty-eight years since, and have never revisited it."

The general overwhelmed me with questions, first, about my family, of which I could tell him little; and then of my own adventures, at which, to my astonishment, he never evinced those symptoms of displeasure I so confidently expected from an old follower of the Bourbons.

This he continued to do, as he eat a hurried meal which was laid out for him in the *salon;* all the rest standing in a circle around, and pressing him with questions for this friend or that at every pause he made.

"You see, gentlemen," cried he, as I replied to some inquiry about

my campaign, "this is an instance of what I have often spoken to you. Here is a youth who leaves his country solely for fighting sake—he does not care much for the epaulette, he cares less for the cause—— Come, come, don't interrupt me; I know you better than you know yourself. You longed for the conflict, and the struggle, and the victory, and, *parbleu*, we may say as we will, but you could have scarcely made a better selection than with his majesty, Emperor and King, as they style him."

This speech met with a sorry reception from the by-standers; and in the dissatisfied expression of their faces, a less confident speaker might have read his condemnation; but the general felt not this, or if he did, he effectually concealed it.

"You have not inquired for Gustave de Meisin," said he, looking round at the circle.

"You have not seen him surely?" cried several together; "we heard he was at Vienna."

"No, *parbleu:* he lives about a league from his old home—the very house we spent our Christmas at eighteen years ago. They have made a barrack of his chateau, and thrown his park into a royal *chasse;* but he has built a hut on the river side, and walks every day through his own ground, which, he says, he never saw so well stocked for many a year. He is as happy as ever, and loves to look out on the Seine before his door, when the bright stream is rippling through many a broad leaf—ay, Messieurs, of good augury too, the lilies of France." He lifted a bumper to his lips as he spoke, and drank the toast with enthusiasm.

This sudden return to loyalty, so boldly announced, served to reinstate him in their estimation; and once again all their former pleasure at his appearance came back, and again the questions poured in from every quarter.

"And the abbé," said one, "what of him? has he made up his mind yet?"

"To be sure he has, and changed it too, at least twice every twenty-four hours. He is ever full of confidence, and brimming with hope, when the wind is from the eastward—but let it only come a point west, his spirits fall at once, and he dreams of frigates and gunboats, and the hulks in the Thames; and though they offered him a cardinal's hat, he'd not venture out to sea."

The warning looks of the bystanders, and even some signals to be cautious, here interrupted the speaker, who paused for a few seconds, and then fixed his eyes on me.

"I have no fears, gentlemen, on that score. I know my countrymen well, though I have lived little among them. My namesake here may like the service of the Emperor better than that of a King—he may prefer the glitter of the eagle to the war-cry of St. Louis—but he'll never betray the private conversations nor expose the opinions expressed before him, in all the confidence of social intercourse.—We are speaking, Mr. Burke, of an abbé who is about to visit Ireland, and whose fears of the English cruisers seem little reasonable to some

of my friends here, though you can explain, perhaps, that they are not groundless. I forgot—you were but a boy when you crossed that sea."

"But he will go at last," said Madame de Langeac; "I suppose we may rely on that."

"We hope," said the General, shrugging his shoulders with an air of doubt, "because, when we can do nothing else, we can always hope," and so saying he arose from the table, and taking a courteous leave of each person in turn, pleading the fatigue of his journey, he retired for the night. I left the saloon soon after, and went to my room full of all I had heard, and pondering many thoughts about the abbé and his intended voyage.

I spent a sleepless night—thoughts of home, long lost in the excitement of my career, came flocking to my brain, and a desire to revisit my country, stronger perhaps, because undefined in its object, made me restless and feverish. It was with delight I perceived the day dawning, and dressing myself hastily, I descended to the garden. To my surprise, I found General Burke already there. He was sauntering along slowly by himself, and seemed wrapped in meditation. The noise of my approach startled him, and he looked up.

"Ah! my countryman—so early astir," said he, saluting me courteously. "Is this a habit of yours?"

"No, sir. I cannot claim the merit of such wakefulness; but last night I never closed my eyes. A few words you dropped in conversation in the drawing-room kept possession of my heart, and even yet I cannot expel them."

"I saw it at the time I spoke," replied the General, with a keen quick glance. "You changed colour twice as I mentioned the Abbé Gernon—do you know him?"

"No, sir. It was his intended journey, not himself, for which I felt interested."

"You would wish to accompany him, perhaps. Well, the matter is not impossible; but as time presses, and we have little leisure for mysteries, tell me frankly why are you here?"

In few words, and without a comment on any portion of my conduct, I told him the principal circumstances of my life, down to the decisive moment of my leaving the army. "After that step," said I, "feeling that no career can open to me here, I wish to regain my own country."

"You are right," said the General, slowly. "It is your only course now. The venture is not without risk, less from the English cruisers than the French, for the abbé is well known in England, and Ireland too; but his royalist character would find slight favour with Fouché. You are willing to run the risk, I suppose?"

"I am."

"And to travel as the abbé's servant, at least to Falaise?—there the disguise will end."

"Perfectly so."

"And for this service, are you also ready to render us one in return?" said he, peering at me beneath his eye-lashes.

"If it involve the good faith I once swore to preserve toward the Emperor Napoleon, I refuse it at once. On such a condition I cannot accept your aid."

"And does your heart still linger where your pride has been so insulted?"

"It does, it does—to be his soldier once more, I would submit to every thing but dishonour."

"In that case," said he, smiling good-naturedly, "my conscience is a clear one; and I may forward your escape with the satisfying reflection that I have diminished the enemies of his Majesty Louis the Eighteenth by one most inveterate follower of Napoleon. I shall ask no conditions of you. When are you ready?"

"To-day—now."

"Let me see—to-morrow will be the 8th—to-morrow will do.

"I will write about it at once. Meanwhile, it is as well you should not drop any hint of your intended departure, except to Madame de Langeac, whose secresy may be relied on."

"May I ask," said I, "if you run any risk in thus befriending me? It is an office, believe me, of little promise."

"None whatever. Rarely a month passes over without some one or other leaving this for England. The intercourse between Rome and Ireland is uninterrupted, and has been so during the hottest period of the war."

"This seems most unaccountable to me—I cannot understand it."

"There is a key to the mystery, however," said he smiling. "The English govornment have confidence in the peaceful efforts of the priesthood as regards Ireland, and permit them to hold unlimited intercourse with the Holy See, which fears France and the spirit of her Emperor. The Bourbons look to the church as the last hope of the restoration. It is in the Catholic religion of this country, and its traditions, that monarchy has its root. Sap one, and you undermine the other. Legitimacy is a holy relic—like any other, the priests are the guardians over it; and as for the present ruler of France, he trusts in the spirit of the church to increase its converts, and believes that Ireland is ripening to revolt through the agency of the priests. Fouché alone is not deceived. Between him and the church the war is to the knife, and but for him, the high seas would be more open than the road to Strasbourg—at least to all with a shaven crown and a silk frock. Here, then, is the simple explanation of what seemed so difficult; and I believe you will find it the true one."

"But two out of the three parties must be deceived," said I.

"Perhaps all three are," replied he, smiling sarcastically. "There are some, at least, who deem the return of the rightful sovereign is more to be hoped from the sabre than the crozier, and think, that Rome never was true except to Rome. As to your journey, however, its only difficulty or danger is the transit through France—once at the coast, and all is safe. Your passport shall be made out as a retired 'sous-officier'

returning to his home. You will take Marbœuf in the route, and I will give you the necessary directions for discovering the abbé."

"Is it not possible," said I, "that *he* may feel no inclination to encumber himself with a fellow-traveller, and particularly one a stranger to him?"

"Have no fear on that head. Your presence, on the contrary, will give him courage, and we must let him suppose you accompany him at our suggestion."

"Not with any implied knowledge, or any connexion with your views, however," said I—"this is well understood between us."

"Perfectly so. And now meet me here this evening after coffee, and I will give you your final instructions. Adieu for the present."

He waved his hand and left me. Then after walking a few paces turned quickly round and said—

"You will remember, a blouse and knapsack are indispensable for your equipment. Adieu."

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